Sinking Deeper Into The Vietnamese Morass, P. 2

Remember When LBJ Called Diem The Churchill Of Asia?

"When asked about Vietnam, Mr. Nixon . . . called Mr. Thieu one of the four or five best political leaders in the world."

—From Nixon's on-the-record-but-not-for-direct-quotation talk with reporters on the Presidential plane between Bangkok and New Delhi July 31.

I. F. Stone's Weekly

Now Published Bi-Weekly

VOL XVII, NO. 16 SEPTEMBER 9, 1969 WASHINGTON, D. C. 20 CENTS

Nixon About To Abolish Hunger "For All Time"—Again

On the problems of the poor, as on everything else, the Nixon Administration flounders about like a ship with a broken rudder. In its first months, the word went out that there would be no food stamp program. Then last May a day before Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare Finch and Secretary of Agriculture Hardin were to appear before the Senate's McGovern Committee on Hunger, the Administration decided it would be too embarrassing to let them go up on the hill empty-handed. So Nixon sent Congress a food-stamp message. The rhetoric had a high caloric content:

That hunger and malnutrition should persist in a land such as our (Nixon said) is embarrassing and intolerable . . . Millions of Americans are simply too poor to feed their families properly . . . Something like the very honor of American democracy is at issue . . . The moment is at hand to put an end to hunger in America itself for all time.

Still Waiting For That Moment

To the hungry this must have sounded like the Prophet Elijah landing with a mandate from Heaven. But the program didn't match the advertising copy. It fit Senator Mondale's capsule history of the food stamp program. He said the government "keeps authorizing dreams and appropriating peanuts." Though "the moment" was "at hand" to "put an end to hunger . . . for all time," Congress is still waiting for the Administration to send up a bill. Even the niggardly Senate Agriculture Committee has reported out a food stamp bill better than Nixon's proposals, and it will be among the main items of business when the Senate reconvenes. Senator McGovern has a bill in (with 31 co-sponsors) which would expand our meagre food stamp program to five times its current size. By failing to send Congress a specific legislative proposal, the White House is delaying action in food stamps altogether.

The confusion has been compounded by the President's new message on welfare. Two-thirds of all persons on relief are in dependent families. "For dependent families," Nixon said in his welfare message, "there will be an orderly substitution of food stamps by the new direct monetary payments." The food stamp program he outlined last May would apply only to single persons or childless couples. But, according to an analysis by the National Council on Hunger and Nutrition, if food stamps are eliminated this will cut welfare standards for 87% of those in dependent families. Nixon said his program would be "a leap upward for many thousands of families that cannot care for themselves." This would be true only for those living in Alabama, Florida, Mississippi, South Carolina and Texas. Even with a reasonable amount of state supplementation, four-fifths of those in dependent families will end up with less to eat under Nixon's latest program to end hunger.

The principle of a national standard and the principle of a minimum welfare guarantee represent steps forward but the ballyhoo* had best be muted until the fine print is available in a legislative proposal. It is not a guaranteed minimum income. "A guaranteed income," Nixon said, "would under-

(Continued on Page Four)

Numbers Game With Poverty

The Government is playing a numbers game on poverty. The Bureau of the Census Aug. 18 put out a report which said that in 1968 about 1.6 million white and .8 million colored persons "moved above the poverty level," leaving 25.4 million below it. This generated optimistic headlines, "Number of Poor Down Two Million." But for those who recalled the annual report of the President's Council of Economic Advisers last January, this looked like a rise of 3.4 million. The Council reported exuberantly that after four years of the war on poverty "Americans are increasingly prosperous" and only 22 million still lived below the poverty line! How could the Census Bureau now call 25.4 million a 2 million drop? The answer may be found in the McGovern committee report on hunger released Aug. 7. It charged that political considerations were coloring poverty statistics. "In 1968, for example," it said, "Government statisticians estimated there were between 22 and 27 million Americans living in poverty." But at the beginning of 1969 "the higher of these two figures was dropped without explanation" and the 22 million used as the official estimate, though "few experts" thought it accurate. The McGovern report predicted correctly that a new Census Bureau report would put the real figure between 25 and 26 million. What McGovern could not foresee was that this would be made to look like a 2 million drop by resurrecting that earlier 27 million figure and deducting 25 million from it! Even in statistics, the poor can't get an honest count.

***U.S. News & World Report called the proposals "so revolutionary" as to create unrest in Congress while Newsweek said they were "so sweeping that even some of his Republican Cabinet officers were left gasping for conservative breath."**

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Nixon Came Back With Johnson's Favorite Pipe Dream . . .

NIXON'S WELFARE AND REVENUE-SHARING PLANS were based on the expectation he brought back from his round-the-world trip that the Vietnam war would soon be over, and end in a U.S. political victory, releasing funds in fiscal 1971 for domestic purposes. Typical of the glow emanating from the White House was the forecast in *U.S. News* (pre-dated Aug. 18) that "the Reds are ready to extend the 'lull', *even let the war fade away.*" (Emphasis in original). The notion that the enemy would some day fade away was long a favorite Johnson-Rusk pipe-dream. They must be still addicted to it in Saigon and Bangkok, the stop-overs where Nixon was given the "Asian" and on-the-spot U.S. military view of the war. Three nights after the Nixon welfare message, the lull ended with simultaneous enemy attacks on 150 allied installations. If the enemy offensive continues and Nixon delays any further troop replacements, there will be no revenues to share in fiscal 1971 with the States and the poor. The enemy offensive sharpens the No. 1 question of U.S. policy—to get out of the war or risk more social conflict and inflation at home.

INFLATION MAY PROVE THE VIET CONG'S most formidable ally. A *Reuters* dispatch in the *Washington Post* Aug. 25 says the prices of sugar and rice have tripled in Saigon in the past two weeks, and living costs have risen 23% in 31 months. The suffering this imposes is not made less bearable by the ostentatious living and profits of the Generals and the upper crust. Here the war's inflation takes its toll, too. Harry E. Niles, National Chairman of the Business Executives Move For Vietnam Peace, sent the President a letter noting that the consumers price index has risen from 108.3 in July, 1964, just before the Tonkin Gulf affair to 128.2 in July of this year. Niles deplored the fact that there has been "no real slow-down" in the war while the main moves to stop inflation have been to cut funds for education, health and civic improvements.

FAR FROM EXTRICATING ITSELF, the U.S. is sinking deeper into the Vietnamese morass. It is hard to avoid the conclusion that the hardened U.S. stance at the Paris peace talks and the choice of South Vietnam's highest ranking General to be its new Prime Minister reflect the same delusion that the war is going so well that we can afford to be tough. Nixon and Thieu are living in the same dream world that led to the undoing of Johnson and Diem. Premier Tran Van Huong got into trouble by imposing higher taxes on imported luxuries. The cabal of landlords, Generals and profiteers who dominate the rigged legislature are unwilling to make the slightest sacrifices even to save their own skins. The new government flaunts the worst possible symbols. The three top men are not only Generals but Generals who were trained by and fought for the French against their own people. Khiem is a master of intrigue, who has steadily worked his way upward by knifing every chief who helped his rise. The best account of his career is by John E. Woodruff from Saigon in the *Baltimore Sun* (Aug. 24). Khiem's one supposed asset, his Buddhism, is also in doubt. If his luck and pattern hold, Khiem may next oust Thieu. Saigon needed a democratic facade. Instead it has put on its ugliest—and truest—face. This is a victory not just for hawks but for social elements so blind their doom is inevitable. But we are to foot the bill.

THE TIE VOTE BY WHICH THE ATTACK ON THE ABM failed will raise the curtain on the most detailed take-apart of the military budget the country has ever seen. When Congress reconvenes, the MIRV, the new manned bomber, the Navy's carrier planes and cargo planes for Pax Americana

As Far As We Can Go?

Q. So you take issue with the idea that, in offering a mixed electoral commission and an election open to all, we have gone as far as we can go, to use Nixon's words?

A. I don't know what's been offered. I don't know why they take this position. It never occurred to me that the Communists would enter an election on the basis of the winner taking all. There has to be some prior understanding on other issues. You've got to go through the NLF's 10 points. You can't pick just one aspect of settlement . . . I don't think it's a reasonable proposition to just pick one thing in the election, particularly as the [Saigon] government continues to put people in jail. THEY GIVE NO INDICATION THAT ANYBODY'S GOING TO HAVE ANY FREEDOM IN SOUTH VIETNAM TO HAVE A FREE DISCUSSION OR FREE CAMPAIGNING. [Emphasis added].

—Hedrick Smith interview with Averell Harriman, New York Times Magazine *Aug. 24. Must reading.*

How Hunger Stunts The Children Of The Poor In Infancy — And Its Social Cost

"Malnutrition and undernourishment among poor American children can and does result in — apathy, listlessness, and loss of energy and ability to concentrate, slowness of comprehension, inattention, restlessness, behavioral problems, and retarded learning . . . In fact undernutrition may be the primary cause of diminished intellectual achievement among poor American children. At least one study in this country, in which other economic and social factors were controlled, has established a direct correlation between undernutrition in infancy and stunted physical and mental development in preschool years.*

"That severe malnutrition of the kind found in developing countries results in permanent brain damage to children who are retarded for life has been scientifically substantiated. More study is needed to determine the exact relationship between malnutrition and irreversible brain damage in this country, but . . . the clear evidence that malnutrition is one major factor in retarded intellectual development is certainly enough to make action imperative. Immediate measures must be undertaken to assure that every pregnant woman, every infant, every preschool child, and every school child who risks suffering from hunger or malnutrition receives an adequate, nutritious diet.

"The economic and social costs to our society — the loss of productivity and work capacity, the costs of disease and mortality . . . in short, the costs of blighted lives are also the inevitable results of hunger and malnutrition. . . . These costs can be calculated in economic terms . . . The Bureau of the Budget has already estimated, preliminarily, that for every dollar we save by failing to eliminate hunger and malnutrition it costs our nation $3.30."

—From the Senate's (McGovern) Committee report on The Food Gap: Hunger and Malnutrition in the U.S.

*"They were shorter, weighed less and had small heads. . . . Their IQs were lower than the control children and it was found that their neurological and intellectual development also correlated with the duration of their undernutrition in infancy"—*From footnote p. 15 of the report.*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

. . . A Change of One Vote Could Still Block The ABM

purposes will all be targets. The announcement from the summer White House that even the end of the Vietnam war will free little money for domestic purposes will only provoke sharper onslaught on Pentagon spending. A foretaste was Senator Proxmire's reaction to Secretary Laird's announcement that he was cutting $3 billion from the 1970 budget as a result of warnings from Mahon in the House that it might cut $5 billion. Proxmire, whose Joint Economic Committee hearings have opened up a mine of information on the hidden realities of the military budget, called Laird's cuts "tokenism" and derided Laird's warnings that they would endanger U.S. defenses. Proxmire said the $2 billion overrun on the C-5A plan would pay personnel costs for 200,000 combat troops for an entire year; that Admiral Rickover told Proxmire's committee $2 billion could be saved by a uniform accounting system at the Pentagon; and that interviews with Defense Department experts last year by Congressional Quarterly showed that $10 billion could be saved without harming defenses. The ABM itself may come under fire again when the appropriation comes up for action. A change of one vote could block it.

ONE ASPECT OF THAT "CONTINGENCY PLAN" with Thailand has not yet been explored. The "plan" was drawn up in 1965. That was the year Thailand allowed the U.S. to begin bombing North Vietnam from Thai bases. That was, by any normal standard, an act of war on Thailand's part and invited retaliation. Imagine what we would do if Canada lent its air fields for enemy bomber attacks on the U.S.! If the Vietnam war were not so one-sided and North Vietnam had a real air force, those Thai bases would have been blasted immediately. Or if the Soviet Union or China had intervened with planes or troops, one of their first targets would have been the Thai bases from which North Vietnam was being bombed. This is what Thailand risked and this is why we had to promise aid against external "aggression" and to nail down the promises in a secret agreement. P.S. Those who wondered what Nixon was talking about in Bangkok when he stressed our common traditions with Thailand—what traditions could there be in common between an ancient Oriental despotism and a modern democracy?—now have their answer. Both take grave risks of war without letting their people know what they are doing.

Poland's Stalinists At Work and Play

The writers took action against censorship from the celebrated 'Letter of The 34' through the 'Kolakowski affair' when 28 writers left the party in protest against his expulsion to the extraordinary meeting of the Writers' Union when its most respected members supported the Czechoslovak struggle. The turning point was the Israeli-Arab war. Of course this was only a pretext. In his speech about the 'fifth column', Mr. Gomulka provided the new [neo-Stalinist] team with a weapon. The anti-Semitic campaign that followed took various forms. One of the most bizarre was the attempts by the new team, searching the countryside for birth certificates, to discover proof of the Jewish extraction of their opponents. When the hunted Jews began to leave Poland, the liberal intellectuals made a point of coming to the station to say farewell. The security police took photographs of these 'demonstrators' and I remember a particularly disgusting incident when a drunken litterateur from the new team who came to see who among the writers had the nerve to accompany his Jewish friends to the station, asked, "Where is the train to Treblinka?"

—Abridged from interviews in The Times *(London) Aug. 21-2 with Alicja Lisiecka, a leading Polish literary critic, on why she like the Soviet novelist Kuznetsov fled to the West. Mrs. Lisiecka said many of Poland's foremost writers have been forbidden to publish. Her story and the degeneration of the once liberal Gomulka regime deserve wider attention.*

THE HAYNSWORTH APPOINTMENT TO THE SUPREME COURT is a triple affront—to the nation's blacks, to the labor movement and to those who do not want another Fortas affair on the Supreme Court. Like Fortas, Haynsworth has already shown a lack of candor about his financial ties and a less than scrupulous regard for the Judicial Canon of Ethics. Thanks to William Eaton of the *Chicago Daily News* and the Mankiewicz-Braden column, we now know that Haynsworth hid the full truth about his half million dollar holdings in Carolina Vend-a-Matic when the Deering Milliken case, with which it did business, was before the Court of Appeals. The White House helped to hide the facts. We hope they will be aired in the Senate and the appointment rejected. It would be a poor way to get law and order by undermining respect for our highest court.

An Urgent Step To Slow Up The Militarization Of Our Intellectual Resources

The most significant cut achieved in Pentagon spending on the floor of the Senate before the summer recess was the $45.6 million slash in research funds. This was voted 49-44 on Aug. 12 and represented a victory for a campaign Senator Fulbright began last year to reduce military influence over universities at home and abroad. We urge those concerned over the slow militarization of higher education to begin a campaign now for comparable action in the House, where the military authorization bill has yet to be reported out.

Senator Fulbright opened the debate by quoting from the testimony of Admiral Rickover last year in the hearings held by the Senate Foreign Relations Committee into the research activities of the Defense Department. "The DOD," the maverick Admiral testified, "has been able to involve itself in research having only the remotest relevance to the problems encountered by the armed services — matters at no previous time nor anywhere else in the world deemed to lie within the province of the defense function — just because it has the money."

A striking example was furnished by Senator Proxmire. He said that though the U.S. has established a National Science Foundation for basic and applied research, the Pentagon gets 6 to 7 times as much in this same area. In 1969 NSF had $280 million while the Pentagon had $1,658 million to hand out for basic research. The effect, as Senator Case of New Jersey said, was to give the military a growing influence over the academic community. He was especially concerned, as was Senator Fulbright, about the so-called "behavioral sciences" through which some day the military might learn to manipulate or brain-wash opinion for its own purposes.

Fulbright's successful amendment was aimed in particular at the "think tanks" like Rand, Hudson and other "Institutes" which provide lush employment for intellecuals on the military gravy-train. Fulbright said "the thinking permeating much of this research is likely to lead to a larger and larger military establishment and more Vietnams." Don't let the military restore these cuts in the House.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Few On Welfare Employable, So "Workfare" Is Nonsense

(Continued from Page One)

mine the incentive to work." Every welfare recipient under Nixon's plan "must also accept work or training provided suitable jobs are available, either locally or at some distance if transportation is provided." At what rate of pay and under what conditions Nixon has yet to answer.

New Federalism and Old Oppression

Nixon's New Federalism, in turning over employment training to the States, threatens to reinforce old forms of oppression. In the related field of vocational training, the States have made a poor record. In welfare administration, most of the States and localities have been unsympathetic to the poor, especially the minorities. "If you feed 'em," one Southern county commissioner told a McGovern committee staff member, "they won't work." Would such officials force welfare recipients to take substandard jobs at substandard wages under threat of removal from the welfare rolls? Could this be used to undermine wage rates? To break strikes, particularly those pitiful stirrings of the unskilled and the unorganized at the rural level?

Nixon has often said it was dangerous to raise hopes that could not be fulfilled. His welfare program violates this favorite precept. Both the poor and the well-to-do taxpayer are in for disillusionment. He promised "a complete replacement" of the present welfare system with its humiliations but the minimums he proposes are so low that the State welfare systems, snoopers and all, must remain in existence to supplement them. "A measure of the greatness of a powerful nation," he grandiloquently began his welfare message to Congress, "is the character of the life it creates for those who are powerless to make ends meet." How could he then without blushing offer a $65 a month minimum to the aged, the blind and the disabled? And even less than that to dependent families—$500, or little more than $40 a month, for each adult; $300, or $25 a month, for each child? In what hovel without running water can you feed, clothe and house a family on that income level?

The $1600 minimum is based ultimately on the Agriculture Department's "economy" diet of $1200 a year (see box this page) for a family of four. Any mother who can perform the miracles of cooking, buying and storage this requires should have no trouble obtaining an executive job in industry. The biggest disappointment is invited by Nixon's promise in Madison Avenue prose to replace welfare with "workfare." The AFL-CIO's George Meany, in an unusually sharp criticism of Nixon's plan, pointed out that "contrary to popular conception, the nation's welfare rolls today cover fewer than 100,000 able-bodied men." Even with far more day-care, it is doubtful that enough working mothers can be drawn off relief to make more than a 5% dent in the relief rolls (500,000 off 10,000,000). As for his aid to working fathers paid below the poverty level, a minimum wage of $2 an hour for a 40-hour week would bring them out of poverty faster. Why should the taxpayer subsidize the substandard employer?

How They Fix The Poverty Line

The government now estimates there are 25.4 million Americans living below the poverty line. The McGovern hunger report shows that this line has been placed unrealistically low. The poverty line is based on the Department of Agriculture's "economy" food plan for a family of four. This is then multiplied — again unrealistically — by three (instead of four) to allow for all other expenses. The latest estimate by the Census Bureau places this at $3700 a year. But the Department of Agriculture itself warned last year that this "economy" food budget was only suggested for "emergency" use. "The cost of this plan," it said, "is not a reasonable measure of basic money needs for a good diet." It suggested that welfare agencies use the USDA Low-Cost Food Plan "which costs about 25% more." This would now be about $1541 a year and bring the poverty line for a family of four up to $4600 a year. The McGovern report says Social Security estimates that about 38 million Americans are below that line. The 25.4 million of the Census Bureau estimate are very poor indeed. Yet almost half of the country's blacks live below this $3700 poverty line ($3,886 is their median family income). The Census Bureau also discloses that half the "gainfully" employed in three occupations earn far less: service workers ($3,660), farm laborers ($854 — yes, per year) and other laborers, except in mines ($2,652). These lower income regions are the kingdom of hunger.

This Issue Went To Press August 26

We'll Be Glad to Send A Free Copy of This Issue To A Friend — Send A Long Stamped Addressed Envelope

FOR STONE'S NEW BOOK

For the enclosed $6.95 send I. F. Stone's new book, In A Time of Torment (Random House) regular price $7.95

(To) Name .....

Street .....

City ..... Zip..... State.....

Indicate if gift announcement wished ☐

Please renew (or enter) a sub for the enclosed $5:

Name .....

Street .....

City ..... Zip..... State.....

I. F. Stone's Weekly 9/9/69

4420 29th St. N. W., Washington, D. C. 20008

I. F. Stone's Weekly

Now Published Bi-Weekly

4420 29th St., N. W.

Washington, D. C. 20008

Second class postage paid at Washington, D. C.

I. F. Stone's Weekly. 2d Class Postage Paid at Washington, D.C. Published every other Monday except in August at 4420 29th St., N.W., Washington, D.C. An independent weekly published and edited by I. F. Stone; Circulation Manager, Esther M. Stone. Subscription: $5 in the U.S.; $6 in Canada; $10 elsewhere. Air Mail rates: $17 to Europe; $20 to Israel, Asia and Africa.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED